PUBLIC OPINION

IN SWEDEN ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS

The UN Department of Public Information commissioned a public opinion poll in Sweden in January-February 1990 to assess the awareness, knowledge and image of the UN.

■ THE RESULTS IN BRIEF

- Virtually everybody in Sweden has heard of the UN. UNICEF is also well-known.
- The majority of Swedes believe that the UN is doing a good job.
- Teaching about the UN is extensive and takes place mainly at primary school.
- Human rights and the environment are the leading international issues in Sweden.

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE UN

Ninety-nine per cent of Swedes have heard of the UN. No socio-demographic group registered less than 95 per cent awareness in this respect. Even people with minimum education in Sweden recorded an awareness level of 98 per cent.

Forty-six per cent of Swedes were also able to name a UN-related institution. Thirty per cent named UNICEF, 16 per cent WHO, and 13 per cent UNESCO. FAO, ILO and the Security Council were each named by one per cent. Eighteen per cent knew enough about the UN to name more than one institution.

The following organizations were erroneously identified as UN institutions: the Red Cross (4 per cent); the World Wildlife Fund (3 per cent); the Swedish International Development Agency (2 per cent) and Save the Children Fund (1 per cent).

Swedes with higher education and white collar workers were twice as likely to name a UN institution as blue collar workers or low income earners.

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

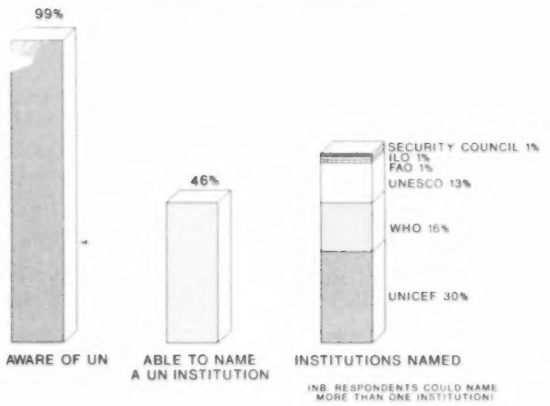

FIGURE 1

UNITED NATIONS

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IDENTIFYING UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

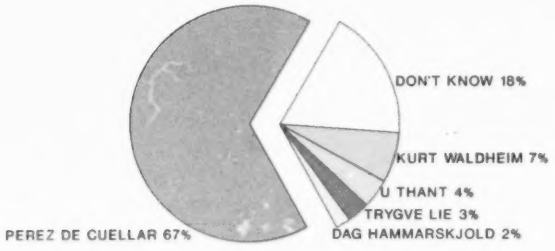

FIGURE 2

UN PERFORMANCE RATING

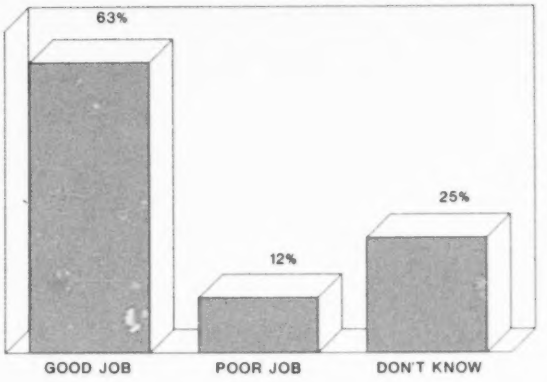

FIGURE 3

IDENTIFICATION OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

Asked to identify the current Secretary-General from a list of five Secretaries-General since 1945, two-thirds of Swedes correctly named Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. The profile of those who could identify him was similar to those who were most able to name a UN body. Older people were more likely to identify him than younger people (75 per cent of people over 45 years of age compared with 55 per cent of 18-29 year olds).

RATING UN PERFORMANCE

Sixty-three per cent of Swedes said the United Nations was doing a good job compared to 12 per cent who said it was doing a poor job. A quarter of all Swedes said they did not know.

All population groups in Sweden were more positive than negative about UN performance. Those most positive were Government white collar workers (75 per cent); students (71 per cent); and those with higher education (70 per cent).

REASONS FOR UN PERFORMANCE RATING

Those who gave the UN positive ratings mainly noted its peace-keeping and international mediation role. They said that UN forces were a calming influence in the Middle East and, in particular, Cyprus. UN assistance to developing countries and its work in the human rights field were also cited. In more general terms, the UN was considered a useful international forum for debate.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THE UN

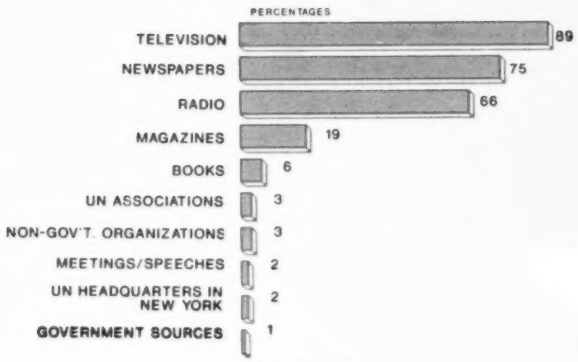

FIGURE 4

TEACHING ABOUT THE UN

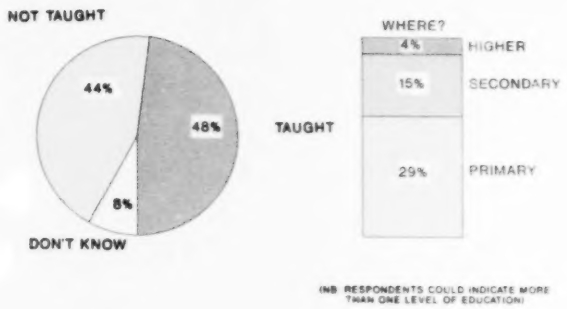

FIGURE 5

A number of Swedes also cited UNICEF's work as a reason for positive rating.

The relatively few who rated UN performance negatively said that it was always dealing with the same issues without being able to resolve them. Some felt that the UN did not react strongly enough—it was too weighted down by negotiations and did not act decisively.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Television, newspapers and radio were by far the most important sources of information about the UN for Swedes. Newspapers were almost as important a source as television for people living in the regions of Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö, as well as those with higher education. Radio was almost as important as newspapers in the rural areas.

Overall, 48 per cent of Swedes indicated that they had been taught about the UN—mainly in primary school. The percentages were even higher for the younger age groups—86 per cent for 15-17 year olds and 73 per cent for 18-29 year olds. Teaching about the UN occurred in all regions of the country, urban and rural.

INTEREST IN UNITED NATIONS ISSUES

Swedes chose human rights and the environment as the issues they would most like to receive information about. Other popular issues were international peace and security, drug abuse and disarmament. Twenty-two per cent of Swedes said they were very interested in knowing more about the work of the UN in general—these were especially people living in the Stockholm region, the well-educated and those over the age of 45.

INTEREST IN UNITED NATIONS ISSUES

	VERY INTERESTED %	SOMEWHAT INTERESTED %	NOT INTERESTED %
HUMAN RIGHTS	58	28	6
ENVIRONMENT	57	29	6
INT'L PEACE AND SECURITY	49	34	8
DRUG ABUSE	46	34	10
DISARMAMENT	45	33	12
CHILDREN'S ISSUES	42	34	14
AIDS	41	34	14
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION	41	32	15
WORLD FOOD PROBLEMS	37	38	15
REFUGEES & DISASTER RELIEF	34	43	12
CRIME PREVENTION	34	40	14
EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN	32	39	17
APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA	29	35	24
IMPROVING HOUSING CONDITIONS	24	42	21
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	23	42	24
THE WORK OF THE UN IN GENERAL	22	49	19
POPULATION ISSUES	18	40	29
TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT	17	43	28
AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY	11	34	42
DECOLONIZATION	11	27	51
INTERNATIONAL DEBT CRISIS	10	33	46
BRINGING INDEP. TO NAMIBIA	10	29	49
NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER	10	25	51
INTERNATIONAL LAW & TREATIES	9	29	51

(NB: SOME RESPONDENTS INDICATED "DON'T KNOW" OR GAVE NO ANSWER TO SOME OF THE ISSUES)

FIGURE 6

CONCLUSION

Almost everyone in Sweden has heard of the UN and most of its citizens demonstrate a good knowledge and appreciation of it. Swedish interest in humanitarian and social issues is also very evident. Those who were taught about the UN also had a much greater knowledge of its institutions.

HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

The poll was conducted in Sweden by the research agency *TEMO-Testhuset AB* which interviewed a nationwide representative sample of 1,101 men and women aged 15-75 years. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in respondents' homes during the period 29 January to 21 February 1990. The margin of sampling error is ± 3 per cent.

The Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit of the UN Department of Public Information undertakes public opinion polls to "analyse trends of opinion throughout the world about the activities of the United Nations and the extent to which an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations is being secured". General Assembly resolution 13 (1), paragraph 13, Annex 1 of 13 February 1946.

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